

Foxton Futures

Manawatū River Loop Rejuvenation

Issue 1 - September 2020

The story so far

The reopening of the Manawatū River Loop at Foxton has been an aspiration for iwi and the wider community for decades.

In 2004 the Save Our River Trust (SORT) was constituted to help realise the dream.

SORT carried out community plantings, built a shared pathway and advocated for both water quality improvements and the reopening of the Loop. Most importantly, they applied for and received a resource consent to remove 25,000 cubic metres of silt from the Loop.

Horowhenua District Council with the support of SORT and Iwi including local hapū of Ngāti Raukawa applied to the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) for support to reopen the Loop and rejuvenate the area with a pier and boardwalks.

In July 2020, the Minister of Regional Economic Development announced a PGF grant of \$3.86M to carry out the shovel-ready aspects of the project - the removal of silt, the rebuilding of the riverbank and rejuvenation of the park. Some of the PGF grant is set aside to investigate what is now called Stage Two – realising the aspiration to reopen the upstream entrance to the riverloop to restore the mana and the mauri of the Manawatū River and specifically the River Loop in Te Awahou. It will be a big project but all partners are dedicated to ensuring it occurs.

Within a month of the funding announcement, people and machinery were on-site getting prepared. By September work was well underway. So far 43 people are working on the project.

The Two Stages

Stage One: Remove silt and rejuvenate Harbourside Reserve: To remove the silt alongside Harbourside Reserve, groynes have been created from which the diggers will operate. The team is extending and stabilising the riverbank and come November we'll start to rejuvenate the reserve, parking, road and pathway to Paretao Gardens.

Stage Two: The Aspiration: Reopening the upstream entrance to the Loop, preparation of a concept plan and connection of the river with Te Awahou Cultural Park and further investment in Paretao Gardens. A Governance Group has been established to oversee this project with SORT, Ngāti Raukawa, the Horizons Regional Council, Muaupoko, Foxton Community Board and the Council. Stage two will also develop the design and consenting for riverside board walks and upgrading boat ramps.



Rescuing wildlife

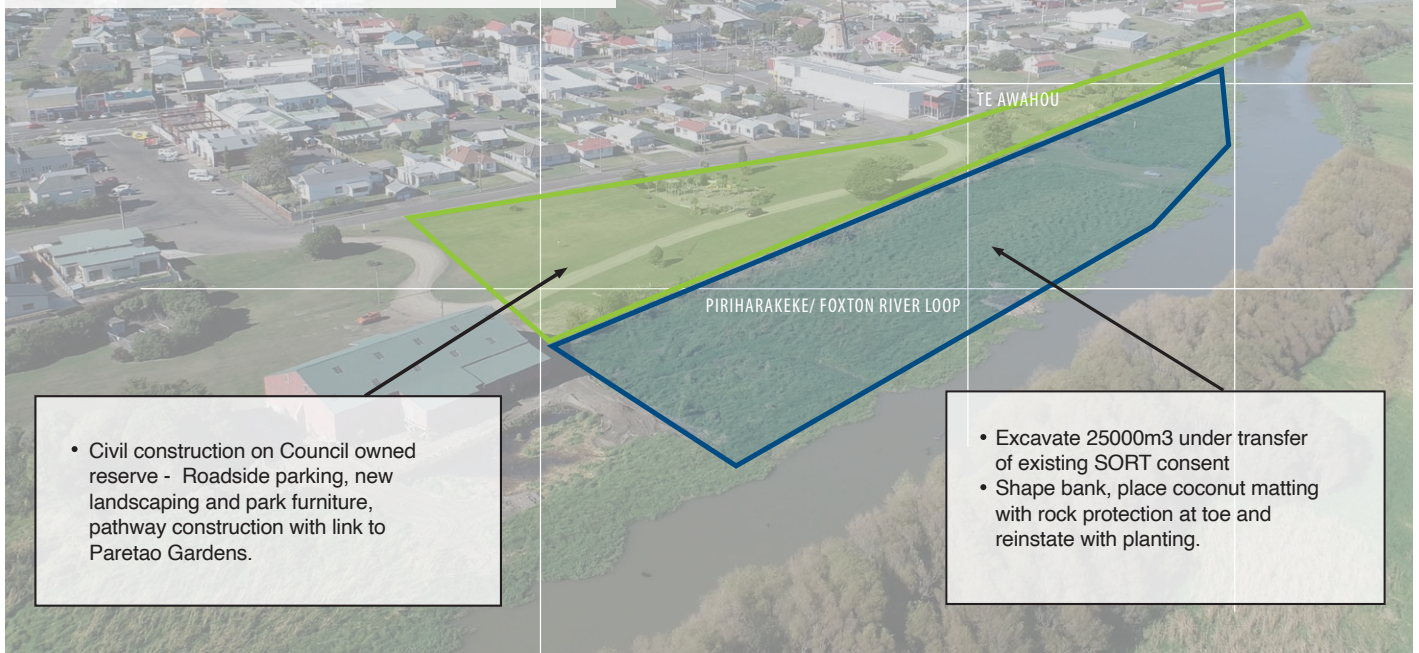
The project will see 25,000 cubic metres of silt removed from the Loop, the affected area is predominantly made up of a mixture of marsh and vegetation, home to young tuna (eels), inanga (whitebait) and yellow-eyed mullets.

We wanted to safeguard as many of these species as we could, so a team of ecologists from Foxton Wildlife Trust and a Ngāti Raukawa Cultural Officer spent several days wading through the area, setting traps and catching as much wildlife as they could. The area has sediment-catching nets placed around it which also prevents wildlife returning.



Foxton Futures Manawatū River Loop Project (Stage One)

Stage One Construction: What we are doing



Sediment control

All infrastructure projects have to have appropriate sediment controls in place to prevent sediments from damaging wildlife habitat. After much planning and implementation of mitigation techniques, Horizons Regional Council has assessed our work and approved it. The area we are working in is now contained by sediment catching nets.

Protecting our history

Working on a site of historical importance is always a difficult task. However, our approach will ensure the remains of the historical port will remain undisturbed.

The removal of the silt and vegetation is unlikely to lead to any archaeological discoveries. However due to the historic nature of the site any excavation in vicinity of the historic wharf or rail yards will be carried out under an Archaeological Authority from Heritage NZ.

The first major job is to build a new bank – it'll be further into the loop than the historical port and that means we can cover and protect the historical remains that are underground.

Local employment – key aspect of the project

A key feature of the Provincial Growth Fund projects is local employment. Currently 43 people are employed on the project.

Horowhenua Alliance – a partnership between Downer and Horowhenua District Council, is the main contractor and through them they employ a number of sub contractors including:

- Caldwell Builders Ltd – Equipment Hire
- Foxton Wildlife Trust – Ecology
- Goodman Contractors Ltd – Equipment Hire and Environmental Controls
- Alan G Gibson Ltd – Equipment Hire and Cartage
- Graeme Bagrie Contract Ltd – Equipment Hire and Cartage
- Reid's Transport Ltd – Cartage and Sand Supply
- Area Scaffold – Site Fencing Hire
- Numerous other small local suppliers including Hammer Hardware, New World and cafes in Foxton.

Trucks on Foxton's streets

The removal of 25,000 cubic metres of silt is a big job that requires a lot of truck movements.

First, the silt is left to dry on the bank, then it is loaded into trucks and transported through the streets of Foxton to Foxton's grassed airfield. The silt will create a bund on which the landowners will build a fence to keep sambo deer off the runway.

Most of the truck movements will have been completed by mid-December. The trucks will come off the highway via Union Street and then into Harbour Street. They exit the site via Clyde Street turning left into Main and out to Avenue Road.



Big diggers at work

Three 20-tonne diggers and a 40-tonne digger will be operating on the site. The 40-tonner can reach 22 metres while the smaller diggers can reach 16 metres. This means they can operate from groynes to remove silt from inside the Loop. The silt is dried on the banks before being loaded into the trucks and removed.



Blessing the site

In late August, the site was blessed before the work started. Pictured are Toha Eparaima and Justin Tamihana of Ngāti Raukawa with project co-ordinator Kaitlin Hubbard.

Meet some of the team



Robin Bigwood

**Site Manager – Foxton Futures,
Manawatū River Rejuvenation Project**

How did you get involved with the project?

I was employed by Downer NZ, to join the Horowhenua Alliance specifically for the project.

What were you doing before?

My work history involves a lot of conservation and civil contracting. I was made redundant due to Covid 19 and nearly ran out of jobs to do at home before getting this job.

What's your hobby/sport you follow?

My interests include hunting and outdoor adventures with my family, surf lifesaving and Land Search and Rescue. Roller derby is hands down the best sport on the planet!

What do you like about the project?

Being able to combine both my conservation and civil construction experience to enhance the Foxton Loop, which I used to compete on when I was a youngster.

Marty Craill

**Senior Project Manager Infrastructure – Foxton
Futures, Manawatū River Rejuvenation Project**

How did you get involved with the project?

My senior manager provided an option to get involved, and I accepted.

What were you doing before?

Project Manager on the Turitea Windfarm (Pahiatua Track)

What's your hobby/sport you follow?

I follow Rugby Union religiously and am a loyal Magpies and Hurricanes

supporter. I regularly exercise at the gym for both physical and mental health and also have a keen interest in American muscle cars through owning a 700+HP Dodge Challenger.

What do you like about the project?

I was not aware of the Foxton River Loop history until my first visit to the site. It's a privilege to be part of the wider team tasked with revitalising the Foxton River Loop and surrounding area for the local community to enjoy.



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know
more?**



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Visit our project page at: <https://www.horowhenua.govt.nz/riverloop>



Or email enquiries@horowhenua.govt.nz

This project is supported by the hapū of Te Awahou and the Save Our River Trust